I:Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR? Khasi AR?



or official quadrennium of the Siem's Durbar. Another post of each in this house is furnished by the people of the State.

The houses of the well-to-do Khasis of the present day in Mawkhar and Cherrapunji are built after the modern style with iron roofs, chimneys, glass windows and doors. In Jowai the well-to-do traders have excellent houses of the European pattern, which are as comfortable as many of the European subordinates' quarters in Shillong. Some up-to-date families in Shillong and at Cherra allow themselves muslin curtains and European furniture.

The houses of the Pnar-Wars are peculiar. The roof, which is thatched with the leaves of a palm called a *tyrsiew*, is long-backed and the eaves come down almost to the ground. There are three rooms in the Wár as in the Khasi house, although called by different names in the Wár dialect. The hearth is in the centre room. The houses are built flush with the ground and are made of bamboos. In the Wár villages of Nongpi and Umsiah there are small houses erected in the compounds of the ordinary dwelling-houses called *ing kmie* (spirit houses). In these houses offerings to the spirits of departed family ancestors are placed at intervals, this practice being very similar to the more ancient form of Shintoism. In some Wár villages there are also separate bachelors' quarters. This custom is in accordance with that of the Naga tribes. There is no such custom amongst the Khasi Uplanders. The Wár houses are similar to those of the Pnar Wars, except that a portion of the house is generally built on a platform, the main house resting on the hill-side and the portion on the platform projecting therefrom, the object being to obtain more space, the area for houses in the village sites being often limited owing to the steepness of the hill-sides.

The Bhoi and Lyngam houses are practically similar, and may be described together. They are generally built on fairly high platforms of bamboo, are frequently 30 to 40 ft. in length, and are divided into various compartments in order to suit the needs of the family. The hearth, which is of earth, is in the centre room. There is a platform at the back of the Lyngam house, and in front of the Bhoi house, used for drying paddy, spreading chillies, &c., and for sitting on when the day's

lc Gordon E-4, 9 (no date) 1907 ART Khasi ART



drive that she does not remarry; the idea being that so long as the bones remain in the widow's keeping, the spirit of her husband is still with her. On this account many wives who mourn their husband's memories, and who do not contemplate remarriage, purposely keep the bones for a long time. If a widow marries, even after the customary taboo period of one year, whilst her deceased husband's bones are still in her keeping, she is generally looked down upon. Her children in such a case perform the ceremony of handing over the bones of their father to his clan in a building specially erected for the purpose. The widow cannot enter therein, or even go near it, whilst the ceremony is proceeding, no matter whether the *ding sang*, or the price for removing the taboo after a husband's death, has been paid to the husband's clan or not. There is no evidence to show that polyandry ever existed amongst the Khasis. Unlike the Thibetans, the Khasi women seem to have contented themselves always with one husband, at any rate with one at a time. Certainly at the present day they are monandrists. Polygamy does not exist amongst the Khasis; such a practice would naturally not be in vogue amongst a people who observe the matriarchate. There are instances, however, of men having wives other than those they have regularly married, and in the War country children by such wives enjoy rights to their father's acquired property equally with the children by the legally married wife. As the clans are strictly exogamous, a Khasi cannot take a wife from his own clan; to do this would entail the most disastrous religious, as well as social consequences. For to marry within the clan is the greatest sin a Khasi can commit, and would cause excommunication by his kindred and the refusal of funeral ceremonies at death, and his bones would not be allowed a resting-place in the sepulchres of the clan. To give a list of all the Khasi exogamous clans would perhaps serve no useful purpose, but I have prepared from information kindly furnished me by the Siems of Khyrim and Cherrapunji, a list of the clans in those States which will be found in Appendices A and B. These will suffice as examples. It will be seen from the Cherra list that the different divisions of the Diengdoh clan, viz. Lolo, Diengdoh-bah, Diengdoh-kylla, are prohibited from intermarriage; this is due to those branches of the clan being

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

cultivated from the province. Adults will clear an acre or two hillsides a day, with the usual accompaniment of jute beers. The estimated cost of maintaining an average family of the labouring class in chest Rs. 8 or 10s. a month.

Towns: Accounts.—There are no towns in the usual acceptance of the word; but the chief places in the Hills, looked upon by the inhabitants as cities, are Shillong, Jowai, Cherra Pinji, and Shella. According to the Census of 1872, Shillong had only 1,384 inhabitants, Cherra Pinji 203, and Jowai 1,500. Jowai, however, is a collection of mud hovels, and the population of Shillong has recently altered since the date of the Census. The latter place has become the Civil Station in 1874, in substitution for Cherra Pinji; and when Assam was erected into an independent Province in 1874, it was selected as the permanent seat of the Local Government. The Chief Commissioner resides there, and also the heads of all departments of the Administration. The area of the Station is 3 miles in length by 1½ or 1¾ miles in breadth. A considerable native population is already settled, and is increasing from day to day. One of the largest weekly markets is held in the Jowai; and with a view to facilitate access to the Station, which is the centre from the Province of Assam, a new road has recently been completed to Gauhati on the Brahmaputra, which will tend to make the place more and more important. An excellent water supply is introduced into Shillong through an aqueduct which has its source in the neighbouring hill streams, and sanitary measures are carefully enforced. Large sums of money have annually been expended on the erection of the public buildings necessary for the offices of the administration. A printing-press has been established, from which issue all the official documents and reports of the Province. The climate is excellent, the temperature being more equable than that of any other hill station in India, and therefore eminently suited to the constitution of Europeans. There is a church at Shillong, and a chaplain on the Bengal establishment officiates both there and at Gauhati. The cantonments were completed in 1873 by the 43rd Regiment of Assam Light Infantry, with three companies. The strength was 3 European officers, 16 native commissioned officers, 60 non-commissioned officers, 300 fighting men, and 38 paid camp followers and non-combatants; grand total, 553. The total cost, including contingencies, was Rs. 1,83,130, or £18,313.